

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS (physios) – What do we do?

My name is Gina Farmer and I work as an NHS physio but I also do some private physio too. So... is there a difference in my two different roles you might ask? Well my answer is both 'no' and 'yes'.

- **NO** because in both roles I have to be registered with the Health Professional Council (HPC) and keep up with my professional development and be ready to show them if they ask to check it, which they do to a percentage of all physiotherapists every 3 years.
- **NO** because I see and treat children in both jobs either in an outpatient setting, in their homes or in their school. I also write reports and give and teach families/carers how to carry out exercise programmes that will help improve or maintain the abilities of the children I treat.
- **YES** because I have more flexibility in my private work and can spend more time treating rather than managing the children on my case-load.
- **YES** because I can treat young adults that are over the age of 19 privately.



So... what sort of things does a physiotherapist with a special interest in treating disabled children and/or young adults actually do? Well, it took me 4 years to get my physiotherapy degree and ever since I qualified in 1995 I have always firmly believed that my role is to try to help people have as good a quality of life as possible. This is still my belief in both of my roles either as a private or an NHS physio today.

For those that don't know; Physiotherapy uses physical approaches to promote, maintain and restore physical, psychological and social well-being, when someone is affected by injury, illness or by developmental or other disability. This can be anything from some advice on simple exercises or stretches or it can also mean giving advice and helping choose equipment that will help manage the position children are in over the whole 24 hour period!

What is the range of children (types of disability) you treat?

In the NHS I mainly treat school age children but in my private work I have treated children and young adults between the ages of just a few months old all the way up to 30 years old. I treat most things from developmental delay, dyspraxia and cerebral palsy to joint pains and posture including some children with chronic fatigue and arthritis.

How long are treatment sessions?

The first time I see someone I carry out an assessment of their needs and to see if I think physiotherapy can help them, this can often take at least an hour. After that treatment sessions are usually about 45 minutes long.

What sort of techniques do you use?

Firstly I think one of the most important technique I need to use is keeping an eye open for non-verbal communication, that is facial expressions, posture, etc; this is because it can tell you so much about what is happening to the child and their family. I use many different types of physiotherapy treatments from giving advice and support to massage, stretches, mobilising joints and teaching different exercises that can be carried out when I am not there. I have been known to go to the local swimming pool with the client and show them ideas of what they can do in the water. I also teach carers how to carry out physiotherapy exercise programmes, and am willing to video this to act as a reminder.

What do you enjoy about your job?

I love helping people get the most out of life! It is great to help a child that is unable to explain what is wrong but is obviously distressed to settle and relax. This can be done in many ways from positioning to just helping them relax their breathing. It is always great to help anyone stop being in pain, but the very best thing about my job is to watch the increase in confidence in the child and carers that so often follows a course of physiotherapy.

Is it still a challenge having been working for so many years?

In a word – YES! I have been a physiotherapist for 14 years now and have treated children with disabilities for 12 of those but I don't think anyone can say that they know it all. There is always more to learn and not always from books or going on courses but often from the families and children themselves.

Below are some websites that you might find useful.

<http://www.nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/Resources.aspx>

<http://www.backcare.org.uk/>

<http://www.physio4kids.org.uk/>

<http://www.csp.org.uk>

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